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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to assist Alberta (Canada) teachers in identifying social behavior difficulties in their students and promoting prosocial behavior through the use of various classroom activities. A social skills diagnostic screen is provided to aid teachers in assessing personal and interpersonal development, social reasoning skills, and classroom behaviors that are appropriate for children. Role playing activities that emphasize these skills are suggested, as well as ways to handle negative behaviors. Also discussed are nine categories of group activities for use in the classroom: (1) getting to know others; (2) rules and respect; (3) responsibility; (4) listening skills; (5) making and keeping friends; (6) decision-making; (7) helping children say no to dangerous or illegal activities; (8) problem-solving; and (9) compromising. Contains 40 references. (MDM)

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Social Skills Development

Activity Manual

Fort McMurray School District No. 2833

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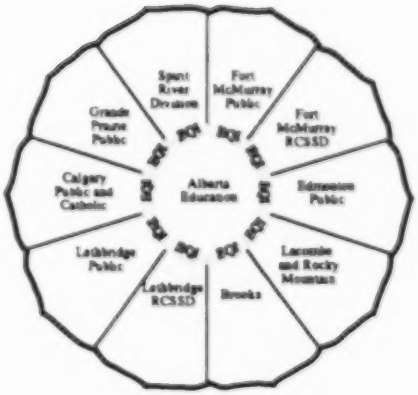

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Under Contract to Alberta Education
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Introduction

"That's my toy!" "I want it!" "Give me that back!" In a primary classroom, two children are fighting over possession of a favorite toy; this is a familiar sound. Moments earlier they were playing side by side. Similar incidents frequently occur in the playground setting. What can primary educators do to minimize such situations and maximize positive social interactions such as cooperation, sharing and helping among children? Often children's prosocial behaviors go unnoticed, while teachers attend to less desirable behaviors.

Teachers, counsellors and administrators in schools inevitably face situations where children exhibit inappropriate behaviors or responses to situations. Many educators can identify a child who has reacted angrily to a suggestion from a teacher. They can identify children on the playground who act out aggressive behaviors for apparently no reason. Many teachers have taught children who never seem to have any friends. As educators we have a responsibility to help children cope with these difficulties and teach them appropriate behaviors and responses.

Defined as acts that aid or benefit another person (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977), prosocial behaviors are viewed as central to the development of a child's social competence. Research has indicated that prosocial behavior develops at an early age (Bar-Tal, Raviv & Leiser, 1980; Hay, 1979; Yarrow & Waxler, 1976). In a school setting, prosocial behaviors occur among most children, although in low numbers (Yarrow & Waxler, 1976). Perhaps some children have not developed the ability to perceive the needs of others, or adults may be reinforcing aggressive rather than prosocial actions.

McGinnis and Goldstein (1984) point out three main reasons why children may fail to respond appropriately in social situations:

1. the child may not know what the appropriate behavior is;
2. the child may have the knowledge, but lack the practice; or
3. their emotional responses may inhibit the performance of the desirable behavior (p. 5).

Essa (1990) indicates that inappropriate behaviors can also be the result of environmental factors that are beyond the child's control. Educators and parents should consider possible external factors that may be affecting behavior. For example, parents and teachers may have inappropriate expectations for the child's developmental level. Adults who work with young children must be aware of the levels of development in the young children with whom they work. Children may act out because too little or too much is being expected of them.

Health problems may also affect a child's behavior. Whether a child has a simple stomach ache or whether he is being affected by long-term allergies, the child's behavior may be a result of having fewer "resources" for handling behavior when not feeling well. Additionally, a child who is receiving a poor nutritional diet may show behavior disorders in the classroom. Teachers should be aware, too, of changes at home that may be causing stress for the child. Not only such traumatic events such as divorce and separation but happy events like the birth of a new child or a wedding in the family may cause a great deal of stress in a young child's life.

Two of the most common causes of poor behavior in young children are the inconsistent messages that they may be receiving and the lack of consistent guidelines. The inconsistent messages may come from the same adult on different days, or from a difference in discipline styles between the home and school. Children respond well when they know what is expected of them. A simple set of logical rules in a classroom can assist them in this, especially if they have had some input into the creation of the rules. Finally, some children may act out in an inappropriate way simply because they need attention. It is up to educators to help children find appropriate ways of seeking attention.

The actual teaching of positive, productive social behaviors may increase a child's success in developing the behaviors that can assist the child in many different areas. Children may need help in learning skills that could help them in surviving in the classroom, help them make friends, deal with their feelings, deal with aggression in themselves and others, and deal with stress. This manual identifies student activities that facilitate the teaching of prosocial skills.

Why Use Student Checklists and Activities?

It is hoped that teachers can assist children in the development of prosocial behaviors in a relatively straight forward and practical fashion through the use of the Three Level Model and Activity Manual. Use of these instruments will result in the identification of students at risk with social behavior difficulties and possible poor academic performance. They should also assist in the identification of behaviors that may need both home and school intervention through assisting the teacher in the selection of general intervention strategies.

Underlying the development of these instruments is a philosophy which believes that, in learning activities, all social interactions are opportunities for children to improve their social behavior and to receive support and positive consequences for doing so. The scope of this manual is limited to the four categories found in the *Social Skills Diagnostic Screen*. However, many of these activities are interrelated. The target population for this program is not learning disabled or mentally handicapped children, but those who may have problems or deficiencies which create situations that the teacher must resolve if the learning process is to be effective. These problems, if not properly dealt with, may become serious adult deficiencies. It is necessary for the teacher to help these children, for their own sake and for the sake of those around them.

It has been well established that practiced behavior, or behavior that has occurred frequently in the past, will be more likely to occur in future situations. In classrooms, teachers are provided with many opportunities to model appropriate behaviors for students, and to provide positive feedback when students exhibit the same. For some students though, this is not enough. These children are in need of deliberate instruction on appropriate behaviors and responses because they may not have had models of prosocial behaviors in their environment. Others may recognize an appropriate behavior, but be unsure of where and when to use (or not to use) these behaviors. Others may lack the opportunity or motivation to practice the skill and may not have practiced the skill enough for it to have become a part of their functioning behavioral repertoire. Emotions such as fear and anxiety may prevent the child from reacting effectively. Still other children may have undesirable behaviors reinforced, and not be positively reinforced for prosocial behaviors. For instance, a young child may get attention much more quickly by whining than by quietly expressing his/her wants. Likewise, it may be easy for a teacher to inadvertently ignore a young student's appropriate request for help – but it is very difficult to ignore a full-blown temper tantrum!

There are many methods that can be used in teaching the desirable social skills in classrooms. Generalization or transfer of learned behaviors is facilitated when the setting in which the teaching occurs closely resembles the natural setting where the skill will be used. The greater the number of identical elements or characteristics shared by the teaching and the application settings, the greater the success in transferring the behavior from teaching situation to real-life application. This is why role play is so often used in the teaching of social skills. However, role play is not enough. As with modelling, the effects of role play will not be transferred unless the child knows why he should behave in new ways. Motivation and incentive components, with performance feedback will increase the chances of the child actually applying what he or she has learned. Students will perform skills they have been taught if there is some "pay off" for doing so. New behaviors are more likely to endure over time if they are rewarded, but diminish if they have

been ignored or actively challenged. This factor underlies the importance of involving parents in the process. If parents are aware of the process they may be able to reinforce the use of the child's prosocial skills at home. In the case of the child with serious social skill deficiencies, it is imperative that the parents be actively involved with the program so that they can become involved in the modelling aspect of the program as well as assisting the child with any homework assignments. Hopefully, through this program, communication with the home can be enhanced and perceptions clarified about student behaviors.

Categories of the "Social Skills Diagnostic Screen"

The four categories in the screen allow the teacher to perform what is called an "ecological assessment", or one that is carried out in the environment where the student most often functions. An ecological assessment assumes that many factors other than just student-centered ones may cause or aggravate behavioral problems.

Personal Factors

The screen contains ten skills under the category of *Personal Factors*. These include:

1. Shows consideration for how others feel.
2. Interested in good grooming and appearance.
3. Accepts responsibility for actions.
4. Expresses feelings in a positive and appropriate manner.
5. Is self-confident in areas of strength.
6. Acts appropriately for age.
7. Shows initiative.
8. Does well at school work.
9. Is good at sports.
10. Controls anger.

These factors are indicative of how the child feels about himself/herself. They indicate strengths and weaknesses related to the child's self-esteem and indicate whether or not the child likes himself/herself. Most of these skills can be judged by observing the child as he or she works alone. They reflect the child's confidence and independence level.

Interpersonal Factors

Included in the screen, under the category of *Interpersonal Factors*, are the following skills:

1. Makes friends easily.
2. Makes friends he/she can really trust and shares thoughts.
3. Understands and helps others.
4. Says nice things to others when they have done something well.
5. Shares and cooperates with peers.
6. Can explain opinions, beliefs and/or feelings easily.
7. Uses "body language" appropriately to support verbal messages (e.g., smiles, waves, nods, etc).
8. Shows a reasonable amount of assertiveness.
9. Can start and end conversations without feeling nervous or uneasy.
10. Politely questions rules that may be unfair.
11. Actively listens to others when they are talking.
12. Asks questions skillfully.
13. Participates in group activities.
14. Adapts easily to new situations.
15. Accepts people who are different.
16. Can compromise where it seems appropriate.

The skills found in this area relate to the child's ability to interact with others. The skills focus on the child's confidence and his ability to share his feelings and opinions. When judging the child's strengths in this area, it is important to look at the child in relation to the other children in the classroom.

Social Reasoning Skills

The screen includes eight skills of *Reasoning*:

1. Recognizes unusual aspects of social situations.
2. Can relate new social situations to previous social situations.
3. Understands why things have happened as they have.
4. Can resolve problems.
5. Can create novel responses to problems.
6. Makes decisions thoughtfully.
7. Can choose the best alternative.
8. Shows curiosity.

The skills found in this category relate to the child's ability to think through a problem, choose a solution (whether appropriate or not) and the ability to "think on his/her feet". It does not necessarily relate to elements such as the frustration level that may appear because of a new problem. These would be identified under *Personal Factors*. Instead, *Social Reasoning Skills* reflect the child's ability to think about a problem before coming to a conclusion. For example, this skill may be exhibited not only in a subject area, but also on the playground where a difficulty may arise and the child exhibits some control when bullied, instead of immediately placing blame on another child.

Classroom Behaviors

The list of skills related to *Classroom Behaviors* includes the following:

1. Initiates interaction with teacher when appropriate.
2. Can work independently.
3. Perseveres in activities for an appropriate length of time.
4. Contributes to discussions.
5. Follows classroom procedures.
6. Does homework on time.
7. Is careful of possessions and property.
8. Listens to the teacher when directions are being given.
9. Completes tasks.
10. Uses time efficiently.

These classroom behaviors are often expectations set out in classroom rules, and can be more obvious when broken than when followed. It is hoped that all children are regularly encouraged to develop the skills that would enable them to become better organized and to follow the generally accepted classroom behaviors. Many of these skills focus on the child's ability to be organized and follow directions and routines. Educators must remember to pay close attention to rules, making them flexible enough to be followed and yet still allow children the necessary latitude to discover for themselves the best way to organize their work.

Student Activities

Role Play

Role Play is a form of "Let's pretend"; the children act out situations that involve problems in social behaviors. Role playing as a form of structured learning is intended to serve as behavioral rehearsal or practice for future use of the skill. Role playing helps the student learn how to perform the skill. It is suggested that, whenever possible, small groups be used with younger children when role playing. Suggested situations are given in this section, but children's ideas can be used as well. Discussion of past events involving the use of the skill to be learned can be useful in stimulating the students to think of times when a similar situation may occur in the future. In such a case, the hypothetical future situation, rather than the re-enactment of the past event, would be more useful for role playing because re-enacting past events can have limited value.

Before beginning the actual role playing, the teacher should review the behavioral skill that will be focussed on. The benefits of the skill and some examples of situations where it can be used should be discussed with the class. Then, the particular skill can be explained and even modelled by the teacher as it applies to the role play situation, thus assisting the main actor in making a successful attempt to enact the skill. The teacher also needs to remind each of the participants of their roles and responsibilities. The main actor is to follow the behavioral skill; the co-actor is to stay in the role of the other person; and the observers are to watch carefully for the performance of the behavioral skill.

Following the role play, there should be a brief feedback period during which the main actor finds out how well he followed the behavioral skill, and the teacher provides encouragement to the main actor to try the skill in real life. To be most effective, teachers should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Provide reinforcement only after the role play that follows the desired behavioral skill.

2. Provide reinforcement at the earliest appropriate opportunity after the role play.

3. Provide reinforcement to the co-actor for being helpful and cooperative.

4. Praise particular aspects of performance. For example, "That's a nice way to say it" or "You used a nice, friendly tone of voice."

5. Provide enough role play activities for each class member to have sufficient opportunity to be reinforced.

6. Provide no reinforcement when role play departs significantly from the expected behavioral skill practice.

7. Provide reinforcement when an individual's performance has improved over a previous performance.

While some children will be shy to perform in front of others, many of the children will enjoy the opportunity. It is suggested that in the beginning you ask for voluteers, partnering a shy child with a more willing student. All children should be encouraged to attempt the role plays. Keep the groups small to help children overcome their shyness. Sessions with the class should not last for more than 20-30 minutes in the primary grades, and should occur as frequently as 3-5 times a week. Shorter, more frequent sessions will increase the children's ability to transfer the skills they are learning to real-life situations.

Target Behavior	**Suggested Situations**
Personal Factors	
Shows consideration for how others feel.	You are walking home from school with a friend, and a younger friend joins you. She does not know your friend. A new kid at school is waiting for the swing that you are playing on. He looks lonely. You are in a hurry, but your friend wants to tell you about his soccer game last night.
Accepts responsibility for actions.	You are in a group of kids who are fighting at recess. The teacher is standing close by and comes up to you. You are playing softball in front of your house. You hit the ball, and it goes through a neighbour's window. She is very mad.
Is self-confident in areas of strength.	Your teacher tells you that you have written a very good poem and asks you to read it in front of the class.
Shows initiative.	Your group has to do a project but no one can agree on how to get started.
Controls anger.	You want a popsicle. Your sister says, "Ha, Ha! I took the last one and you can't have it," in a taunting voice.

Target Behavior	Suggested Situations
Interpersonal Factors	
Makes friends easily.	You are going to a new school for the first time. You are nervous. The teacher introduces you to a "buddy" on your first day.
Says nice things to others when they have done something well.	Your best friend is on the hockey team that just beat your team in a big game. Your friend scored the winning goal.
Shares and cooperates with peers.	A fellow student, with whom you do not usually play, has forgotten his pencil crayons and asks to borrow some of yours.
Shows a reasonable amount of assertiveness.	Two kids you don't know are playing a game that you would really like to join in.
Can start and end conversations without feeling nervous or uneasy.	You have just introduced yourself to a new kid. A friend of yours walks by. You need to introduce them.
Politely questions rules that may be unfair.	Your teacher has just told the whole class that they need to stay in for recess because a few children were not listening.
Actively listens to others when they are talking.	Your friend tells you all about his vacation to Disneyland. Your teacher is telling you about a project to try at home tonight. You are taking a phone message for mother. Your best friend comes in and starts showing you his/her new toy.
Accepts people who are different	A kid, whom other children call "nerd", asks for help with a math problem.
Can compromise where it seems appropriate.	Your mom is taking you and your sister to a movie. They want to see a different movie than you do.

Target Behavior	Suggested Situations
Social Reasoning Skills	
Can relate new social situations to previous social situations.	You are at a birthday party and you do not know some of the children. Someone you do not know asks you to play with him.
Can resolve problems. Makes decisions thoughtfully.	A friend invites you to go to a movie. You agree, but you forgot that you had already promised to go over to another friend's house.
Can create novel responses to problems.	You are playing a game with your brother, and he keeps moving your "man", taking your turn, etc.
Can choose the best alternative.	A friend invites you to play at his house but you know that his parents are not home. Your mother does not allow you to go to someone's house when the parents are not at home.
Shows curiosity.	You are at your friend's house. His mom is telling you how to make dessert.

Group Activities for the Classroom

As expected, it is important to remember that a child's teacher is one of the most obvious role models for the child. If teachers want children to learn to listen, they must show them that they can listen to them. If they want them to be able to compromise, they need to show them that they can compromise when appropriate. If they want them to learn to use time efficiently, then they must show them positive examples of using time efficiently. However, there are activities that teachers can use in the classroom to demonstrate specific skills. The following activities are meant as examples of these and should help to promote prosocial skills through group and team work. Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are of particular value in a primary classroom.

Section 1: Getting to Know Some Important People

These activities will help during the first week of school to encourage the children to play together and to learn each other's names.

Activity 1-1:

Ask the students to look around and raise their hands if:

- They know the name and something else about everyone.
- They know the name and something else about almost everyone.
- They know the name and something else about only a few.
- They don't know anyone.

Pass out blank recipe cards and ask the children to write down five important facts about themselves. As a good model, the teacher should do the same thing, but read hers aloud as an example for the children. Have the children put their names on the cards, and collect them for a later activity.

For this activity, have the children sit in pairs. Explain to them that the person with whom they are sitting is very important, that if they already know this person, there is still much to learn, but that if they do not know this person, there are a great many things that they can learn.

Ask the students to think about the name that they want to be called by their classmates. Some may want to use a nickname. Give each student a piece of paper on which they will create a name picture. Have them write their name, but use it as a base to draw things in which they are interested. For example, a student named David might turn the "I" of his name into a baseball bat and have the "A" wearing a baseball cap. Susan might turn the "S" into a skipping rope and the "A" into a doll's head. The students can have their partners assist them. Once these drawings are completed the students can use them to introduce themselves. Stress that it is important to pronounce each other's names correctly. If some names are difficult to pronounce, you may want to ask the student to teach the class to say it correctly. This will model a "Please help me learn" attitude for the students.

Have each class member say his/her name out loud for the class, and then describe those things in the drawing that are important to them. Now ask students to raise their hands if:

- they think they know the name of everyone in the class;
- they found someone in the class with similar interests.

Have the students turn to their partners, say their name and one thing that they learn about them today.

Activity 1-2:

Sit the children in pairs and hand out their recipe cards with the five important facts on them. Ask the students to read each other's cards or read their card to their partner. Together they are going to write a poem about each partner using the following model:

Line one: Student's first name and last name

Line two: Positive words that describe a student

Line three: Words that describe the student's interests

Line four: Student's first and last name again.

Example:

Shirley Smith
Happy, smiling, laughing
Skipping, Gymnastics
Shirley Smith

Have the partners also draw a picture of their partner to accompany the poem when it is displayed.

Activity 1-3:

Bring the students together in a circle and explain to them that even though they may not know everyone's name yet, there are many things that we do know about each other just by using their eyes. To help them understand this, you can use a poem in which they can participate by following the actions:

Teacher: I look around the circle
and what do I see?
Children in our class
looking at me.

Keep repeating the rhyme by changing the last two lines to say such things as:

Children with green shirts
clapping with me.

or Children with white socks
bowing with me.

or Children with blue jeans
jumping with me

or Children with missing teeth
winking at me.

Have the children make up additional verses depending on what the children in the class are wearing, or include birthdays, etc.

Activity 1-4:

Draw three faces on the board: one that looks happy, one that looks worried and another that looks sad.

1. What feelings do these faces tell us about?
2. Ask the children which face best describes them when they are coming to school.
3. Ask them what might happen that can make them feel worried.

Tell children that often when we do something for the first time, we can have many different feelings and thoughts.

Explain the importance of meeting new people and learning their names.

Prepare ahead of time, strips of paper suitable to make headbands for each child. Ask each child what they would like to be called in school, explaining the difference between given names and nick names. Have the children print their names on their headbands and then assist them in stapling them to fit their heads.

Activity 1-5:

For this activity you will need photographs of each child, either taken by you or brought from home. Write each child's name on a name card. On the back of both the photograph and the name card put a symbol that will identify them as matching (use either a number or something like a star, heart or shape in different colours).

Give each child another child's namecard. Hold up a student's photograph and ask who has this student's name card. If no one can answer, then turn the picture around and ask them to look for the matching symbol. Use the photos and name cards to make a display of class members, re-using them after a few days to play the game again.

Section 2: Talking about Rules and Respect

Activity 2-1:

Write the word "rule" on the blackboard and have the students brainstorm about what rules mean to them, and what they think of when they hear the word "rule". Try to accept all responses without comment.

Discuss with students some of the basic school rules. See if they can determine why the rule might be important. Ask them what might happen if one student was allowed to make the rules for the entire class. Have them consider and if that would be a good idea.

Activity 2-2:

Have students think about the question "How would you like people to treat you so that they show respect in our classroom?" Model the activity by stating one way that you would like to be treated. An example might be: "I would like you to say 'hello' to me when I come into the classroom in the morning." Give everyone two small cards and ask them to write down one way that they would like to be treated on each card. Tell them not to sign their name. Collect the cards and shuffle them. On the board, place the following categories: "Being Fair", "Helping", "Sharing", "Talking to Each Other", and "Listening". You might like to add other categories. Redistribute the cards and ask someone to read the card that they have. As a group decide to which category each statement belongs.

Divide the students into as many groups as there are categories and have them create one rule that would fit under their category. When they have finished, ask a member of the group to write a rule on the board. When all of the rules are on the board, discuss as a class how to make each rule clearer (if need be). Also make corrections or additions. Together, decide which rules about respect they want for the classroom. Since you are an active participant in this, you may also contribute to the discussion.

****Activity 2-3:***

In primary classrooms, it is helpful to create "Sharing and Caring" rules. Start the discussion by talking about rules such as traffic and sports games. Ask the students what would happen if there were not any rules. Help them discuss the following:

- rules keep us safe;
- rules help us learn;
- rules help us get along and work together.

Provide the students with some examples of things that might be a problem in a classroom. Ask them to identify the problem and then ask if they can think of an easy-to-follow rule that might help solve the problem. An example of the rules that primary students may determine include:

- Listen to each other
- Share your smile
- Be kind and nice
- Don't call each other names
- Don't push
- Take turns
- Help each other
- Don't be mean

Read the following story and ask the children to listen carefully to see if they can find examples of children following the rules or breaking the rules. If they recognize rules being followed by the children in the story, they should give you the 'thumbs up' signal. If they hear a rule being broken by the children, they should give you the 'thumbs down' signal. You might want to practice this with some examples first.

One day, the teacher said to the class,"This morning, I would like you to draw a picture of your favorite animal. It can be any animal in the world."

Debbie, Mark and Sheila sat down at a table together. John sat in the story corner. This was his first day at the school and he felt shy. When Sheila noticed him by himself she said, "Come and sit with us." (thumbs up)

John smiled. "Okay!" he said.

The teacher gave out large pieces of paper and Mark said, "I know! I'll draw a polar bear. I love polar bears."

Debbie laughed. "A polar bear!" she said. "That's a dumb idea." (thumbs down) *Mark frowned at his empty paper. Sheila whispered to him, "I think polar bears are great." Mark smiled at her and started to draw his polar bear.* (thumbs up)

John said,"Mark, could I have that white crayon when you are finished with it?"

"No, I need a lot of white," said Mark, colouring his polar bear. (thumbs down)

"Here, John," said Debbie. She handed John her white crayon. "Use mine. I'll use it after you have finished." (thumbs up)

"Thanks," John said. He started drawing his zebra, but right away the point on the crayon broke.

"Here, give it to me. I'm sharpening mine, and I can sharpen yours, too." said Sheila. (thumbs up)

"No!" said John. "I don't need any help!" (thumbs down)

Sheila frowned. "Okay, if you want to be stupid about it." (thumbs down)

But John kept breaking the point of the crayon in the sharpener. Finally he sighed, "Sheila, would you show me how to do it?" (thumbs up)

"Sure," she said. As Sheila sharpened John's crayon, John said to Mark, "I think I like being in this school. Just as long as your polar bear doesn't eat my zebra!" (thumbs up)

Section 3: Thinking about Responsibility

Activity 3-1:

As a group, brainstorm for jobs that need to be done in the classroom. Discuss with the class:

- What are some things that you like about school jobs?
- How do you feel when you do a job at school?

Explain to the class that jobs involve SKILLS, BENEFITS TO OTHERS, and BENEFITS TO OURSELVES. This can be summarized by saying, "In order to do a job, a person must first have the skills necessary to do the job. When people use these skills and do a job well, they help and benefit others. They also receive the benefits of appreciation from others and feel pleased with themselves."

Explain that people usually apply for jobs by filling out application forms. Have students fill in the application forms for the jobs that the class has decided need to be done around the classroom. Explain that each job is a temporary position and that they will be filled monthly or whenever you decide is best for you. Explain that they may not get the job that they apply for, the first time. If at first some jobs do not receive any applications, you may choose to announce this and some students may want to apply for more than one job.

Discuss with students what happens when people depend on you to do a job. Ask them what happens if this is the case, and you forget to do your job, or don't do it well. Give them some examples from the workplace. An example: - if the doctor gave you the wrong medicine; or - the snowplow operator forgot to show up for work.

Student Application Form

Your Name: _____

Job Wanted: _____

Skills needed to do this job: _____

_____

Why I am a good person to do this job: _____

_____

How my doing this job will help others: _____

_____

Other reasons why I should be chosen to do this job:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signature

Section 4: Let's Practice Listening

Activity 4-1:

Introduce the idea of listening skill, and prepare a chart as follows:

Listening Skills

Actions	Responses
- look at the speaker	- ask questions: "Why? How?"
- smile	- make comments: "Great."
- nod	- "That's too bad."
- lean forward	- say how the person might feel
- sit still	- "I bet you feel happy about it."

Ask for a volunteer to help you show the class what it means to be a good listener. Ask the students to tell you about a hobby or special interest that they have. When finished, explain to the class that good listening skills show the other person that you are interested in what he or she is saying, and that listening encourages them to talk, instead of being interrupted. Explain that when we listen carefully to others, we are really trying to understand what they are telling us.

Divide the class into partners. On the board, have written the following topics for the partners to discuss:

- I got my nickname because ...
- My favourite sport is .....
- My family really has fun when we..
- On Saturdays I like to ....
- I would really like to go to..

Have one of the partners practice listening skills while the other person talks. After two minutes have them switch roles. Then discuss what their partners did that made them feel good, and helped them know that the partner was listening. Discuss where listening skills can be helpful besides at school. Discuss why friends practice good listening skills.

Activity 4-2:

Have students collect pictures from magazines and newspapers that show people either listening or not listening. When they have collected a number of pictures, create a large chart and sort the picture into the two categories. Display the pictures on the bulletin board. If enough pictures are collected, have smaller groups make their own charts for display.

Activity 4-3:

List the following statements on the board and ask students to explain whether they agree or disagree:

- Good listeners seldom interrupt.
- People's eyes can tell us if they are listening or not.
- Listening well is hard to do.
- Most people would rather talk than listen.
- You can't fake listening.

Activity 4-4:

Discuss different kinds of listening with the students, and explain that we listen for different reasons. Have students brainstorm for examples of the following types of listening:

- Listening for Information
- Listening for Pleasure or Entertainment
- Listening to Sounds in the Environment
- Listening to the Messages of Others (Conversation)

Ask the students to explain why someone might say "I can hear better when the lights are off." Also, you can discuss whether or not **hearing** is the same thing as **listening**.

***Activity 4-5:**

Have the students gather in a group on the floor. Ask the students to think about their favourite TV show, and when they think of it, raise their hand. When all of the children have raised their hands, tell them that at the count of 'three' you would like them all to tell each other the name of the TV program. The intent is to create a situation where everyone is talking at once. Initially, students may use their normal speaking voices, but when they realize that they are not being heard they may raise their voices. End the activity quickly so that noise does not become a problem.

Ask the students what happened. Ask them to raise their hands if they are able to tell you the favourite show of more than three other students. Ask them if they were listening to their classmates, and if they think that their classmates were listening to them. Have them explain a way to enable them to hear the names of the favourite programs of all of the students. Try their suggestions to see if they work better. Discuss why it is important to listen to what others have to say.

Section 5: Making Friends and Keeping Friends

Activity 5-1:

Read the following situation to the students, and then have them discuss the three steps to resolving the conflict:

It was Sunday afternoon, and Susan and Theresa were sitting at Susan's house trying to decide what to do for the afternoon. "Let's go down to the park on our bikes," said Susan.

"Nah, my bike has a tire that needs air - and I would have to pump it up," Theresa replied. "Why don't we play with your computer instead?"

"Ah, c'mon, Theresa. I'm tired of playing with the computer. I really want to ride my bike. I could help you put air in your tire."

"But we rode our bikes the day before yesterday." said Theresa, who was starting to feel angry. "We always do what you want."

"Well, then you can go home, because I don't want to play with the computer!" shouted Susan.

"You can be so bossy, Susan." Theresa said as she slammed the door on her way out.

Discussion Steps:

One: What is the real problem? What do both sides want or need?
Two: What could happen to let both people get their way that is not harmful to anyone?
Three: What positive solution can both sides agree on?

Have the class think of other situations with their friends that could be solved by thinking through the three steps before an argument breaks out. You might suggest a class situation where you have a sum of money and must decide as a class what to do with it.

Activity 5-2:

Explain that sometimes conflict starts between very good friends, and that it is helpful to think about the way that we treat friends. Have the students brainstorm for a list of "Friendship Skills", and put the suggestions on the blackboard. These might include things like: listen, share, give comfort, say thank you, show appreciation, invite them to do things, help them. When the list is complete, take a few minutes to discuss whether or not each item is appropriate and cross off the ones that are not friendship skills. For example: do their homework for them; buy them presents; do what they want me to do, .. and so on.

Give the students a recipe card and ask them to write four things from the list on to the card. They do not need to put their names on the cards. Collect the cards and shuffle them. Hand them back out to the students, and tell them that their

"Friendship Homework" for the week is to practice three of the things found on the card. At the end of the week, they should check off the items that they have tried and sign their names on the back of the card. After collecting the cards, you may want to have a discussion where students can give examples of the "Friendship Skills" that they tried during the week.

Activity 5-3:

Have each student select the name of a classmate from a container and have them write a paragraph about how that person shows friendship. When the writing is done, have the class sit on the floor in a circle. Those who are willing to share what they have written can read it out loud to the class. These can be displayed in a "Friendship Circle" on a bulletin board.

Activity 5-4:

Have the students write a friendship poem in a cinquain pattern.

Example:

My friends	2 syllables
I like them all	4 syllables
They stick by me all of the time	8 syllables
When we're not together, I miss them very much	12 syllables
My friends	2 syllables

****Activity 5-5:***

Make a friendship book with the class. Have each student copy this verse onto the top of a blank page:

> Friends are fun,
> all the day through,
> I'm a friend,
> Here's what I do.

Each student can then draw themselves doing something as a friend. When all of the pages are completed, fasten them together in a class book. Read the book together, having each artist explain his/her contribution. Ask them how it feels when they are being "friends" with someone.

Section 6: Making Decisions

Activity 6-1:

Explain to the class that, sometimes decision making is, or can be, complicated. In order to make good decisions it is necessary to think about how our decisions will affect other people. Introduce and discuss the five steps to good decision making:

1. Think about all of the choices you can make.
2. Predict what might happen for each of the choices.
3. Choose the best choice.

4. Follow through with your choice.
5. Re-think your choice. Was it really the best one?

Divide the class into six groups and give one situation (see below) to each group. Have them evaluate the person's choice. Help them make the best decision using the five points described above. Ask them to think about each incident from the point of view of the child in the story situation.

After listening to each group present its decisions, ask the children to think about why decision making might be an important skill to have. Give them examples where you may have had to make a similar decision. Ask them for examples of some of the decisions they have had to make. Explain to them that it might be as simple as trying to decide what colour of sneakers to buy, or as complicated as deciding what career to choose when they are an adult.

Ask them for examples of decisions that might need to be made quickly, and decisions that would need more time. Explain that we have to make decisions every day, and that some will be easy to make and other will be more difficult, but it is always important to consider how our decision will affect other people.

Situations:

1. James told his younger brother that he would help him finish a school project tonight, but he forgot that he had his own project to do. Both projects are due tomorrow, and there is no one else at home to help his little brother. Help James make a good decision.

2. Monty has a book report due on Monday, but his cousin is coming to stay for the weekend. Monty wants to figure out a way to get his homework done and have time to play with his cousin. Help Monty think of a way to solve his problem.

3. Mimi has a chance to make some money after school babysitting a neighbour's child, but the rest of the kids in the neighbourhood play ball after school. She has been a star on the team. What should she decide to do?

4. Jeanie has a chance to be on the school running team, but the practices are at the same time as her karate lessons. Help her make a good choice in solving this problem.

5. Matthew and Kyle are best friends. They both try out for a team. Kyle makes it but Matthew doesn't. Kyle can't decide if he should go ahead and play on the team. Help him decide what he should do.

6. Bruce and David had an argument on the way to school. Bruce usually sits with David at lunch time, but he can't decide what to do today. Help him make his choice.

Activity 6-2:

Here are some situations that are appropriate for primary students. Read them aloud and then ask students to identify the choices in the situation, and which one they would have chosen:

1. One afternoon, Dad asked Terri to help out. He said that she could watch her baby sister, or fold the laundry.

2. At a restaurant, Nancy saw that the items on the children's menu were fish sticks and hamburgers.

3. One day, Carl's mother had to go shopping. She told him that he could come with her, or stay at home with his grandmother.

4. Carla's aunt offered to read her a story. She asked Carla if she wanted to hear a story about outer space, or dinosaurs.

5. Scott had to finish his homework. His Dad said he could do it after school, or wait and do it after supper.

Section 7: Helping Students Say "No"

Activity 7-1:

Explain the purpose of the lesson is learning to say "no" to negative peer pressure. The students will need to try to define "peer pressure". You can explain that there can be positive peer pressure as well.

Brainstorm with the class for times when they might want to say "no" to suggestions from other children. These might include:

- using drugs
- destroying someone's belongings
- getting into a car with a stranger
- doing something that might hurt yourself or others
- breaking rules at school or at home
- breaking the law

Have students cut out a piece of red construction paper so that it is in the shape of a stop sign. You may need to do this for them. Have them write their own "stop" list on this stop sign.

Have them think about ways that they could say "no" to the following situations.

1. Someone wants you to steal an eraser from someone's desk during recess when no one is in the room. How could you say "no"?

2. Someone brings some fireworks to school, and wants you to go to the woods to set them off during recess. How could you say "no"?

3. You are with some friends in a store after school. The man at the register is very busy, and your friend wants you to leave the store without paying for your candy. How could you say "no"?

4. You and a friend are walking home from school and it is very cold outside. An older person that neither of you knows, stops and offers you a drive. How could you say "no"?

Let them choose one situation about which to write a paragraph.

Activity 7-2:

There are a variety of materials available from the Block Parent Association and the RCMP related to saying "no" to strangers, saying "no" to drugs, and saying "no" to others who ask you to join in "criminal" activities. Take advantage of these free materials by calling these agencies.

Section 8: Problem Solving

Activity 8-1:

Explain to the children that today you are going to talk about problem solving, not the kind that they do in math, but what to do when they are faced with problems in everyday situations.

Ask them to list some feelings that they experience when they have a problem. Some feelings might be:

- scared
- angry
- sick
- feel like crying
- nervous

After they have written them down, ask some students to share their suggestions. Then ask them to list some people who they can go to for help when they have a problem. This list might include people like:

- parents
- friends
- a brother or sister
- a police officer
- teacher or principal

Again, ask some students to share some of their lists.

Talk to the students about some things that they can do when faced with a problem that seems big. Suggest that the first thing to do is to try to get their feelings under control so that they can solve the problem. They can do this by:

- Taking a deep breath to calm themselves.
- Talking to themselves, and telling themselves to keep a good attitude.
- Thinking carefully about their choices.
- Keep trying until one of them works.

A sample problem for them to think about:

> You have come to school and realized that you have forgotten your lunch. You feel like crying, but you know that that will not help you get a lunch, so you take a deep breath to calm yourself and try to think of some ways to solve the problem. What can you do?

Ask the students to brainstorm some choices. These may include:

- Call your mother and see if she can bring it.
- Ask your teacher for help.
- Ask your friend to share his/her lunch.

Ask the children to think of reasons why this is an important skill to have. The children may respond:

- You won't have to wait for someone else to solve your problems for you.
- You will feel better.
- Things will be easier.
- You will get into less trouble.

Section 9: Compromising

Activity 9-1:

Begin the class with an introduction to the word "Compromise". Have them guess what it might mean and, after defining it, have them give examples of times where they might have to compromise.

To do the accompanying activity you will need to divide the children into groups of two or three. For each group you will need the following supplies:

- one set of crayons, markers or colour pencils for each group
- construction paper of different colours
- one pair of scissors for the entire class
- one bottle of glue for the entire class

It is important that each group share the resources.

Explain to the groups that they will be making a picture. The picture may be of a monster, a robot or an animal, but the whole group must decide what their creature

is to be. The group must also decide on what it will look like, what colour it will be and its shape. In order to complete the task, they must listen to everyone's opinions and try to compromise on their decision. You will need to monitor the groups, and may need to give examples to the groups on how to compromise in their decision making.

Handling Negative Behaviors

Despite efforts to make children aware of positive social behaviors, there will be times in every classroom when children exhibit negative behavior. There are many ways of dealing with this, but some methods are better at encouraging a positive response in the future. Sometimes, teachers focus too much on the curbing of negative behaviors instead of the promotion of prosocial behaviors.

When confronted with a disruptive behavior, many teachers deal with it immediately and then reflect on the different ways that could have been used. Typically, punishment or bribery have been the traditional response to negative behaviors. Punishment tends not to demonstrate to a child what he should doing; instead, it focuses on what he is not supposed to do. Bribery or reward systems "are artificial attempts to manipulate behavior that offer children no reason to continue acting in the desired way when there is no longer any good to be gained" (Kohn, 1991, p. 500). So what should teachers do when a child shouts out in class and disrupts other students? The following behavior intervention techniques may be tried:

1. Ignore undesirable behaviors to extinguish them through lack of reinforcement.

2. Move to stand near the student as you teach. This allows intervention without verbal identification of the student experiencing difficulty.

3. Utilizing humour can reduce the anxiety in a stressful situation and allow the teacher to regain control.

4. Allow the disruptive student to "save face" and get back "into control" by asking him to leave the room to run an errand or get a drink. This allows the student to calm down and regain his composure without negative consequences.

5. Remove a distracting or disruptive object that seems to be drawing the child's focus.

6. A consistent routine for children with behavior problems can reduce their anxiety over the uncertainty of expectations.

7. Genuine expression of interest in a child and his interests can do a great deal to create a better relationship between the teacher and child.

8. Working directly with a student who experiences difficulty in a particular subject area can help prevent stress and negative behaviors.

These are some techniques that can assist the teacher in dealing with minor behavior disruptions. It is important that teachers reflect on their responses to children in order to determine if they contributed to the negative behavior. It should be recognized that some undesirable behavior could be eliminated through a change in routine, questioning techniques or the manner of the teacher in directing children to do activities.

Many things that occur in classrooms are the result of the teachers' assumptions and expectations.

Thoughtful teachers will ask themselves if they had any part in the negative behavior of the child, especially if it is recurring. Some power struggles can be avoided by thinking carefully about the kind of relationship that has been established with a particular child.

Correspondence of Activities and Social Skills Diagnostic Screen

The following chart helps identify the way in which student activities correspond to the screen items:

Personal Factors:

		Activity	page
1.	Shows consideration for how others feel.	2-2 2-3 5-1 5-2	15 15 21 21
2.	Interested in good grooming and appearance.		
3.	Accepts responsibility for actions.	3-1	17
4.	Expresses feelings in a positive and appropriate manner.	5-1 5-2	21 21
5.	Is self-confident in areas of strength.		
6.	Acts appropriately for age.	3-1	17
7.	Shows initiative.		
8.	Does well at school work.	3-1	17
9.	Is good at sports.		
10.	Controls anger.	3-1	17

Interpersonal Factors:

		Activity	page
1.	Makes friends easily.	1-1	12
		1-2	13
		1-3	13
		1-4	14
		1-5	14
		5-1	21
		5-2	21
		5-3	22
		5-4	22
		5-5	22
2.	Makes friends he/she can really trust and shares thoughts.	5-1	21
		5-2	21
		5-3	22
		5-4	22
		5-5	22
3.	Understands and helps others.	2-2	15
		2-3	15
		5-1	21
		5-2	21
		5-3	22
4.	Says nice things to others when they have done something well.	5-2	21
		5-3	22
		5-4	22
		5-5	22
5.	Shares and cooperates with peers.	2-2	15
		2-3	15
		5-1	21
		5-2	21
		5-3	22
6.	Can explain opinions, beliefs and/or feelings easily.	5-1	21
		5-2	21
		6-1	22
		7-1	24
		7-2	25
7.	Uses "body language" appropriately to support verbal messages (e.g. smiles, waves, nods, etc).	4-1	19
		4-2	19
8.	Shows a reasonable amount of assertiveness.	7-1	24
		7-2	25

Interpersonal Factors (continued)

		Activity	page
9.	Can start and end conversations without feeling nervous or uneasy.		
10.	Politely questions rules that may be unfair.	2-1	14
11.	Actively listens to others when they are talking.	4-1 4-2 4-3 4-4 4-5	19 19 20 20 20
12.	Asks questions skillfully.	4-1 4-2 4-4	19 19 20
13.	Participates in group activities.		
14.	Adapts easily to new situations.		
15.	Accepts people who are different.		
16.	Can compromise where it seems appropriate.	5-1 6-1 9-1	21 22 26

Social Reasoning Skills:

		Activity	page
1.	Recognizes unusual aspects of social situations.		
2.	Can relate new social situations to previous social situations.	5-1 5-2 5-3	21 21 22
3.	Understands why things have happened as they have.	3-1	17
4.	Can resolve problems.	5-1 5-2 6-1 8-1	21 21 22 25
5.	Can create novel responses to problems.	6-1 8-1	22 25
6.	Makes decisions thoughtfully.	5-1 6-1 6-2 7-1 7-2 8-1	21 22 24 24 25 25
7.	Can choose the best alternative.	3-1 5-1 6-1 6-2 7-1 7-2 8-1	17 21 22 24 24 25 25
8.	Shows curiosity.	4-4	20

Classroom Behaviors:

		Activity	page
1.	Initiaties interaction with teacher when appropriate.		
2.	Can work independently.	3-1	17
3.	Perseveres in activities for an appropriate length of time.		
4.	Contributes to discussions.		
5.	Follows classroom procedures.	2-1	14
6.	Does homework on time.	3-1	17
7.	Is careful of possessions and property.	3-1	17
8.	Listens to the teacher when directions are being given.	4-1 4-2 4-3 4-4 4-5	19 19 20 20 20
9.	Completes tasks.	3-1	17
10.	Uses time efficiently.	3-1	17

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